



Biodiversity research and conservation center community trust

Current Problems of Saker Falcon Conservation in The Republic of Kazakhstan

International Workshop: Population Status and Problems of Conservation of the Saker Falcon

THIRD INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL CONFERENCE "EAGLES OF THE PALEARCTIC: STUDY AND CONSERVATION"

Almaty city, 24th of September 2023



*Saker falcon, Zaisan Lake, September 2023,
Author: Nurlan Ongarbayev*

Speaker:

- Nurlan Ongarbayev

Some figures

4808–5628 breeding pairs*



1990*



Government of RoK started officially off taking of saker falcons (this practice was stopped later)

2000



Annual consumption (for Middle East falconers) of **6,825-8,400 birds** (Fox 2002, ERWDA 2003)

1882–2179 breeding pairs*



2010*



No official data, no conservation measures

???



2023

Dangerous OPL (6-10kV) is used



Ohotzooptom, enterprise owned to Government of RoK signed “secret” agreement with some international organizations from Persian Gulf and started to get money for conservation issues

According to unofficial data, the number of saker falcons in Kazakhstan does not exceed 500 pairs

*-I.V. Karyakin, A.S. Levin, A.V. Moshkin, E.G. Nikolenko. *Saker Falcon in Russia and Kazakhstan*. Almaty, 2015

Problems. Criminal and corruption

Problems (1/3)

Criminal and corruption

1

Every
year

every year there are detentions of persons trying to smuggle out rare species of falcons from Kazakhstan

2

0

during the period from the 1990s to the present day, law enforcement and environmental protection agencies of Kazakhstan **have not caught and convicted a single customer or leader** of organized criminal groups involved in the trade in falcons

3

0

not a single corrupt criminal case or proceedings related to the trade in falcons was instituted

4

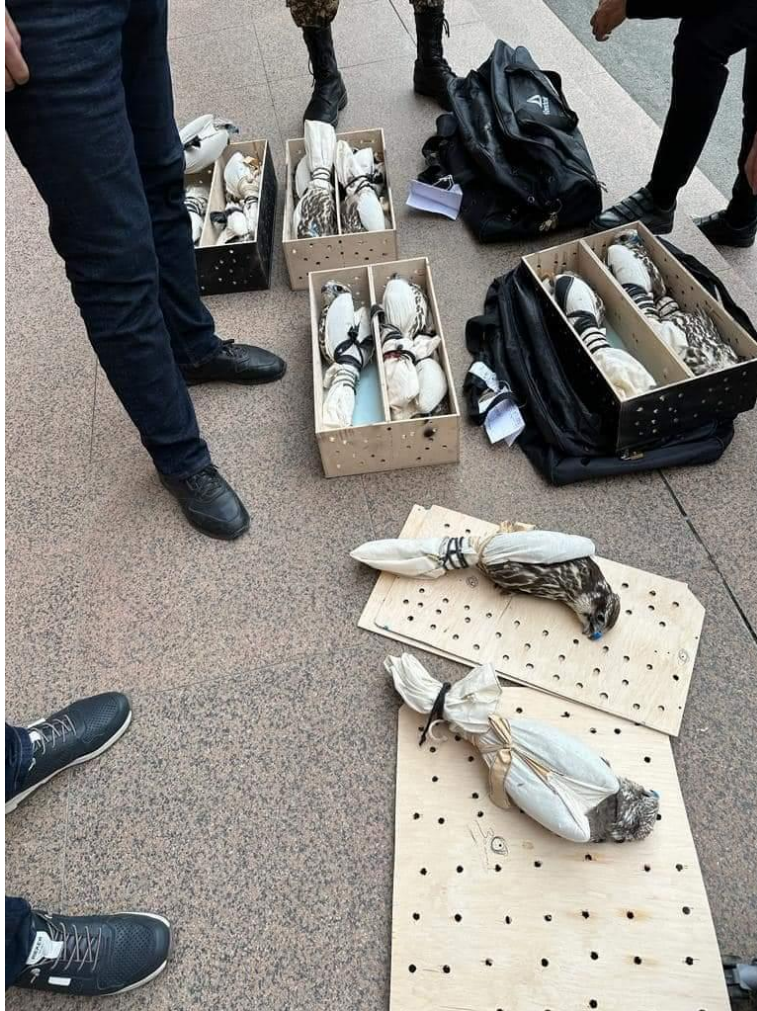
International
Traffic

the case with the detention of a batch of Gyrfalcons (*Falco rusticolus*) in Astana in 2018; not a single investigator or prosecutor asked questions about how the rarest bird, which does not nest, migrate or winter in the territory of Kazakhstan in the amount of 23 specimens ended up on the territory of the Astana airport

As a result, we have a number of circumstances that testify to the failure of law enforcement agencies and conservation authorities to fulfill their functional responsibilities to protect national interests related to the protection of the rarest falcons

Problems (1/3)

Criminal and corruption



«On September 17, 2023 at 14.30 hours employees of Atyrau regional territorial inspection of forestry and wildlife during joint raids with employees of the Atyrau regional Department of National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan detained at the airport of Atyrau 2 citizens (1 citizen of Kazakhstan, and 1 citizen of Turkey) in an attempt to smuggle out red-listed birds (Saker Falcon) in the amount of 28 units.»

This news appeared on the official website and in social media **for two hours**. Later this news was deleted.

Problems. Electrocution

Problems (2/3)

Electrocution

The Saker Falcon continues to die on 6-10 kV overhead power lines. At the same time, according to indirect observations, it can be assumed that the intensity of its death is associated with fluctuations in the food base (medium and small sized rodents), habiting near the location of the overhead power line. The problem of raptors electrocution on overhead power lines **will be considered separately**.



Saker falcons died by electrocution , Zaisan Lake, September 2022, Author: Nurlan Ongarbayev

Problems. Current reintroduction practices

Problems (3/3)

Current reintroduction practices. Closed data

No information provided about the reintroduction of saker falcon – Violation of the article 18 Ecological Code of the RoK.

Biodiversity Research and Conservation Center requested the following data:

1. Biological rationale on releasing saker and peregrine falcons in Kazakhstan from 2017 till 2027
2. Data on releases (survival rates, transmitters mapping etc.)

The following organizations were requested:

1. Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (separately Forestry and Wildlife Committee and Committee for Environmental Regulation and Control)
2. The Institute of Zoology of the RoK
3. The International Fund For Houbara Conservation (personally and officially via Community council)


Problems (3/3)

Current reintroduction practices. Closed data

No information provided about the reintroduction of saker falcon – Violation of the article 18 Ecological Code of the RoK.

Answer from Forestry and Wildlife Committee, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources

«ҚАЗАҚСТАН РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫ
ЭКОЛОГИЯ, ГЕОЛОГИЯ ЖӘНЕ
ТАБИғИ РЕСУРСТАР
МИНИСТРЛІГІНІҢ
ОРМАН ШАРУАШЫЛЫҒЫ ЖӘНЕ
ЖАҢАУАРЛАР ДҮННЕСІ
КОМИТЕТІ» РЕСПУБЛИКАЛЫҚ
МЕМЛЕКЕТТІК МЕКЕМЕСІ



РЕСПУБЛИКАНСКОЕ
ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЕ
УЧРЕЖДЕНИЕ
«КОМИТЕТ ЛЕСНОГО ХОЗЯЙСТВА
И ЖИВОТНОГО МИРА
МИНИСТЕРСТВО ЭКОЛОГИИ,
ГЕОЛОГИИ И ПРИРОДНЫХ
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КАЗАХСТАН

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№ 27-2-9/3Т-О-60 от 17.03.2021

**ОФ «Центр изучения и
сохранения биоразнообразия»**

Комитет лесного хозяйства и животного мира, рассмотрев Ваше обращение касательно предоставления информации по выпуску в природу Казахстана хищных ловчих птиц соколов, сообщает следующее.

На территории Республики Казахстан по выпуску ловчих хищных птиц соколов занимается «Международный фонд охраны дрофы» (далее – Фонд), выпуски проводятся с 2009, на сегодняшний день Фондом в природу Казахстана выпущены 625 хищных ловчих птиц.

Рейнтродукция соколов на территории Республики Казахстан проводится на основании биологического обоснования и государственной экологической экспертизы. Разработкой биологического обоснования по выпуску соколов занимается Институт зоологии Комитета науки МОН РК по заказу Фонда.

Согласно пункта 2 статьи 4 Закон Республики Казахстан «Об охране, воспроизводстве и использовании животного мира» от 9 июля 2004 года № 593, объекты животного мира, изъятые из среды обитания в порядке, установленном настоящим Законом, а также разведенные и содержащиеся в неволе и (или) подувольных условиях, являются собственностью физических и юридических лиц, которые добыли, развели и содержат их.

Учитывая что, выпускаемые ловчие хищные птицы являются собственностью Международного фонда охраны дрофы (далее – Фонд), рекомендуем Вам обратиться для получения детальной информации в

Согласно статье 11 Закона «О языках в Республике Казахстан» и статье 10 Закона «О порядке рассмотрения обращений физических и юридических лиц» ответ на запрос подготовлен на языке обращения.

Согласно статье 12 Закона «О порядке рассмотрения обращений физических и юридических лиц» Вы имеете право на обжалование ответа по обращению.

Заместитель председателя **Е. Муратов**

Учитывая что, выпускаемые ловчие хищные птицы являются собственностью Международного фонда охраны дрофы (далее – Фонд), рекомендуем Вам обратиться для получения детальной информации в указанный Фонд.

1. Forestry and Wildlife official declares that reintroduced birds are hunting birds of prey (in Russian – «Ловчая птица»)
2. Forestry and Wildlife official declares that reintroduced birds are property of international Fund, not a Government of Kazakhstan
3. Forestry and Wildlife official didn't not provide us

Problems (3/3)

Current reintroduction practices. Closed data

**No information provided about the reintroduction of saker falcon – Violation of the article 18
Ecological Code of the RoK.**

No any answer from Committee for Environmental Regulation and Control

Problems (3/3)

Current reintroduction practices. Closed data

No information provided about the reintroduction of saker falcon – Violation of the article 18 Ecological Code of the RoK.

Answer from The Institute of Zoology of the RoK



На Ваш запрос от 19.02.2021 г.

Уважаемый Нурлан Онгарбаев,

Спасибо за интерес к работе нашей организации. Сообщаем, что предоставить Вам перечисленные Биологические обоснования не можем, поскольку они представляют собой научно-обоснованные заключения и рекомендации, выполненные по запросу и оплате заказчиков. Вместе с тем, если у Вас есть конкретные вопросы по общедоступной экологической информации, в частности животному миру, которую Вам может предоставить РГП «Институт зоологии» КН МОН РК на основе имеющихся архивных данных, то мы постараемся дать на них исчерпывающий ответ.

Генеральный директор

Ященко Р.В.

Problems (3/3)

Current reintroduction practices. Closed data

No information provided about the reintroduction of saker falcon – Violation of the article 18 Ecological Code of the RoK.

Answer from International Fund For Houbara Conservation



Международный Фонд Охраны Дрофы
International Fund For Houbara Conservation

Комитет лесного хозяйства и животного мира
Министерства экологии, геологии и природных ресурсов
Республики Казахстан
Вниманию г-на Е. Н. Кутпанбаева,
исполняющего обязанности председателя комитета

1 ноября 2021
Исх. №: IFHC-KZ/LTR/2021/1

Касательно: корпоративный фонд «Международный фонд охраны дрофы- Казахстан». Программа разведения и выпуска птиц на волю.

Уважаемый господин Кутпанбаев,

Со ссылкой на Ваше письмо № 01-12/829 от 16.08.2021 с запросом информации относительно программы по разведению и выпуску в дикую природу Казахстана дроф и соколов мы прежде всего хотели бы поблагодарить Комитет за постоянный интерес к нашей деятельности и поддержке.

Данный проект является флаговым природоохранным проектом для Республики Казахстан и для нашего фонда большая честь возглавлять его.

В приложении направляем Вам два отчета с данными по разведению и выпуску птиц в Казахстане.

Мы приветствуем идею и будем в будущем координировать участие представителей Общественного Совета в выпусках птиц. Мы также готовы предоставлять общую информацию о соколах, которые будут выпускаться в будущем.

Надеемся на продолжительное плодотворное сотрудничество.

С уважением,

Нур Сами Латиф Аль Марзуки
директор



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Main emphasis:

1. 4 (four) *Falco rusticolus* were released according to the Report. This falcon is not habitat of the RoK and is **alien species**.
2. General quantity of the released birds from 2009 till 2019 was provided. Indication of **each tagged bird** with transmitters ID was requested- **not provided**.
3. **Survival information for each tagged bird** was requested. **Not provided**. Instead of it there was provided the information about average statistical survival rate for 3 (three) month with 95% confidence interval (not useful and usable information).
4. Confirmed geolocation data not later than 2 month – was requested, not provided.

Problems (3/3)

Current reintroduction practices. Risks

Inaccessible / incomplete data on releases (survival rates, transmitters mapping etc.) to the public, unclear and inaccessible biological grounds for such releases, low level of control when importing falcons, create a number of risks for saker falcon conservation in Kazakhstan

- The misconception that such activities contribute to the recovery of saker falcon numbers causes false calmness in the specialized Ministry. This leads to postponement of a number of crucial and urgent measures of the state level
- Risk of introduction or release of an alien species/sub-species. For example, based on a review of photo/video footage of Peregrine and Saker Falcons released into the wild in April 2021, the BRCC experts assumed that the Peregrine Falcon captured in the video belongs to the subspecies *Falco peregrinus pealei* (Commander or Aleutian Peregrine Falcon), which inhabits the Pacific coast (Commander and Aleutian Islands).
- Risk of reintroduction of birds that have imprinted humans as their species (imprint). Many birds previously used in falconry and that have lost their commercial value theoretically can be brought as birds for reintroduction in Kazakhstan. Such birds, especially if they are hybrids, pose a threat to wild individuals, whom they may perceive as an enemy
- Risk of releasing unhealthy or unadapted birds for life in the wild. For example, the release of Saker Falcons in May 2023 did not take into account its forage base (with Kazakhstan experiencing one of the largest rodent depressions since 2019, especially of gophers and great gerbil, which are the main food of the Saker Falcon).



Peregrine falcon released in April 2021. Screenshot of video by Ohotzooprom

The color of the paws raises questions that no one has been able to answer

Problems (3/3)

Current reintroduction practices. Risks

Two important factors should be noted separately:

- ❑ The **majority of birds** released as adults, previously used in falconry or bred in nurseries have **zero reproductive value** for Kazakhstan;
- ❑ Authorized bodies of Kazakhstan **do not keep detailed photo/video records of birds imported and released** on the territory of Kazakhstan, which makes it impossible to independently double-check the species purity/crossbreeding of birds. Moreover, there is no genetic analysis of released birds.

Conclusion and next steps

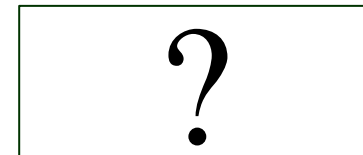
Conclusion and next steps

Thus, we have at least three major problems of Saker Falcon conservation in Kazakhstan:

1. High level of organized crime, possibly corruptly linked to law enforcement and/or conservation agencies in Kazakhstan.
2. The problem of saker falcons dying on overhead power lines 6-10 kV.
3. Weak control and non-transparent practice of import and release (reintroduction) of Saker Falcons on the territory of Kazakhstan

Now BRCC is going to start solving two key tasks (except electrocution, where we have activities):

- ✓ Adoption by Kazakhstan of an official position on the Saker falcon at the state level, in which the Government would define its attitude to the species, its conservation strategy, approaches to protection, etc.
- ✓ Attracting attention of international funds (including those from the Persian Gulf countries) to possible realization and financing of a large international project related to reintroduction of saker falcon by hacking (or other proven) method, on the principles of transparency and public accountability to the people of the Republic of Kazakhstan.





BRCC

Biodiversity Research & Conservation

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